

The present situation

On Demographic Changes and Housing Needs

➤ Ireland's ageing population is growing rapidly. According to Census 2022, 15.1% (n=776,315) of the population were aged 65 or older, an increase of 21.8% from Census 2016. By 2057, this demographic is expected to grow to 1.9m.

➤ 8% of the population reported experiencing at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent or a lot. Insufficient housing options for older people and people living with disabilities. There is a growing need for age-friendly and disability-friendly housing, including homes designed with accessibility and adaptability in mind.

On Social Housing and Homelessness

➤ 58,824 households on the social housing waiting lists, not including c.85,000 on HAP, Rent Supplement or housed through the Rental Assistance Scheme. The supply of social housing is insufficient to meet the demand, leading to long waiting lists and increased pressure on emergency accommodation.

➤ Over-reliance on the private sector to provide 'social housing solutions'. Local Authorities spent €2.3bn on HAP between 2019 and 2023 - €525m was budgeted for 2024 alone.

- Homelessness has reached unprecedented levels. 14,760 people accessed emergency accommodation, including 2,133 families with 4,561 children (September 2024). This does not include rough sleepers, families accessing some emergency accommodation owned by the Local Authority; 'couch surfers'; victims of domestic violence in refuges; asylum seekers; people in Direct Provision.

➤ Adult-only homeless households have tripled since 2014, while family and child homelessness has risen by 400% over the decade. The reported impacts include children not having enough space to learn to crawl or walk; not being able to properly chew due to lack of cooking facilities; and mental health difficulties in children and adults according to Royal College of Physicians (2019).

➤ 43% of families in emergency accommodation in Dublin in Q2 2024 were there for a year or more, with 19% accessing it for 2 or more years. This year just over €434.7m expected to be spent by Local Authorities on emergency accommodation and €303m has been allocated for 2025, while €2.2bn were expended between 2014 and 2023.

On Housing Supply and Delivery

➤ Annual housing completions fall short of the targets set by government plans, exacerbating the housing crisis. Housing for All committed to 33,000 per annum. However, between April 2018 and March 2024, 144,704 homes were built, an average of 24,117 per (full) year.

➤ Ireland's housing deficit ranges between 212,500 and 256,000 homes according to the Housing Commission, requiring a 50% increase to the current annual Housing for All plan from 2024 to 2034.

➤ 163,433 vacant homes in Ireland (Census 2022), representing a missed opportunity to alleviate the housing shortage.

➤ Not all Local Authorities drawing down funding for Traveller Specific Accommodation.

On Private Rented Sector and Affordability

➤ Average house prices in May 2024 were in excess of €335,000 nationwide and €513,000 in Dublin.

➤ 1 in 4 households live in rented accommodation. Long-term private rented accommodation are being replaced with short-term, higher-value lettings.

➤ 31% of the renters were under the age of 35. Younger population face significant barriers to home ownership due to high costs.

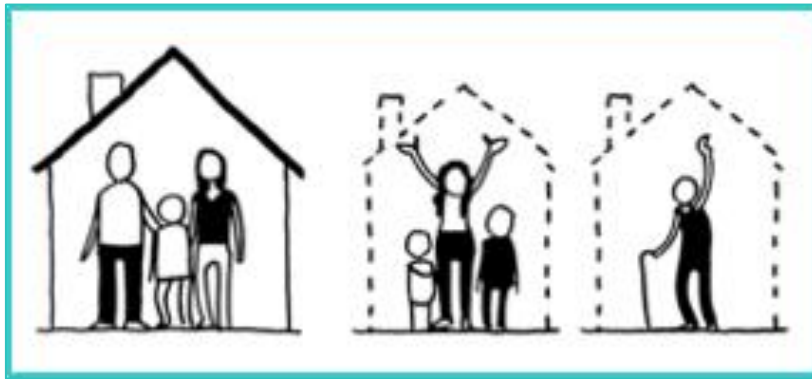
➤ Between the period 2012 – 2022, wages rose by only 27%, compared to residential property prices that surged by 75%.

➤ Only 12% of registered properties were inspected by Local Authorities, more than 90% of which were non-compliant with standards.

➤ In June 2024, just 4% of the total properties were available to rent within the HAP payment limits.

What type of housing system does Ireland need?

A housing system that ensures that adequate and appropriate accommodation is available for all people and provides an equitable system for allocating resources within the housing sector.



Things a new Government can do to develop a system that provides adequate and appropriate housing for all people

- Set a target of 20% of all housing stock to be designated as social housing. Achieve this by building more social housing units and decentralising responsibility for social housing to Local Authorities.
- Address affordability issues by focusing on supply-side cost reductions rather than demand-side income subsidies. This could be done by opening up procurement processes to allow developers to collaborate on bulk purchasing of materials and by waiving some or all construction levies for developers, conditional on the full waiver applying to house prices, thereby reducing unit costs.
- Increase investment in Solas's Housing Modern Methods Demonstration Park and invest in new methodologies, such as modular homes, greater use of timber frame houses, and a reduction on the reliance on concrete. This approach aligns with our environmental obligations under the National Reform and Resilience Plan, as concrete is very carbon intensive. Additionally, these methodologies are easier to scale, thus accelerating construction.
- Align apprenticeships provided under the Housing for All initiatives with new construction methodologies, ensuring a mix of practical experience and class-based learning. This will not only support a transition to these innovative methodologies but also create a cutting-edge construction workforce.
- Expand the provision of 'Housing First' accommodation for families in emergency accommodation, with wraparound supports to include public health nurses, dieticians, speech and language therapists, physical therapists, and mental health workers.
- Introduce legislation to limit the duration families can spend in Family Hubs and other emergency accommodation.
- Ensure that no State land suitable for housing is sold by a Local Authority or State agency.
- Adopt a life-cycle approach to housing development and town planning by implementing Universal Design principles.
- Introduce sanctions for local authorities who do not utilise funding available to provide safe, sustainable Traveller accommodation.
- Increase the rate of Local Authority rent inspections and increase tenant protections.
- Address vacancy and dereliction through the tax system and by introducing Compulsory Sale Orders. Overcome implementation challenges and ensure full compliance.